

In Luke 11:51, Jesus says that the blood of all the prophets
which was “shed from the foundation of the world,”
will “be charged against this generation,
from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah,
who perished between the altar and the sanctuary.
Yes I tell you, it will be required of this generation.”

Jesus is saying to the Pharisees and lawyers that God sent the prophets
in order to bring down judgment upon Israel for their unbelief and rebellion.

This is why Jesus uses Abel and Zechariah as his examples.
In English it works well to say, all the martyrs from “from A to Z.”
Of course in Greek (like in Hebrew), Z is not the last letter of the alphabet.
But in the Hebrew Bible Abel is the first to die for his faith,
as he is killed by his brother Cain in Genesis 4.
And Zechariah is the last of the prophets to die for his faith in 2 Chronicles 24–
since Chronicles is the last book of the Hebrew Bible.

To say “from Abel to Zechariah”
is to give not an alphabetical list of the martyrs,
neither is it a historical list (since there are other prophets who died afterwards).

Rather, “from Abel to Zechariah” only makes sense as a canonical list!
There are martyrs, after all, in the apocrypha –
in the Maccabean literature, for instance.
If Jesus wanted to include all prophetic martyrs,
he could have said from Abel to John the Baptist (cf. Luke 9:9),
but when our Lord Jesus speaks of “the blood of all the prophets,”
he focuses on those that are listed in the canonical books of the OT,
from Genesis to Chronicles.

We hear about the death of Zechariah in our passage tonight.

Introduction:

The theme of exile and restoration – death and resurrection –
runs throughout the Old Testament.

We saw last time how the death of Ahaziah is portrayed as the captivity of the house of David.
Indeed, for six years, it appeared to most of Judah that the house of David had died out.
And certainly the house of David was “in exile.”

But here is the irony.
The house of David was “in exile” *in the temple!*

We hear in our passage tonight that Athaliah had established Baal-worship

and built a house for Baal in Jerusalem.

Athaliah is the last remnant of the house of Ahab.

Her family is dead.

The northern kingdom of Israel – her father’s kingdom –

is now in the hands of Jehu –

the man who killed both her brother and her husband.

Her grandfather, Ethbaal, the king of Tyre, had died around 846 BC,

and by 835 (around the time of Athaliah’s death),

her cousin, Mattan, reigned in Tyre

(and his children were Pygmalion and Dido –

the founder of Carthage).

With Jehu destroying Baal worship in Israel,

now, ironically, Jerusalem becomes the last bastion of Baal worship in the land –

because Jerusalem is also the last bastion of the house of Ahab!

And where the foul seed of Ahab lurks,

there also you will find idolatry and destruction.

But even as Jerusalem and Judah descended into Baal-worship and rebellion,

the Son of David is hidden within the house of God in Jerusalem.

So as long as Joash was in the king’s house,

his life was in danger,

but when he came to the temple he was safe!

Surely Joash could say, “and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever!”

If only he had remembered that!

But the story of Joash is a typical story of many kings.

To whom do you listen?

Where do you go to find counsel?

1. Three Covenants to Defend the Covenant: the Restoration of the House of David (23:1-21)

a. The Courage of Jehoida (v1-7)

23 But in the seventh year Jehoiada took courage and entered into a covenant with the commanders of hundreds, Azariah the son of Jeroham, Ishmael the son of Jehohanan, Azariah the son of Obed, Maaseiah the son of Adaiah, and Elishaphat the son of Zichri. ² And they went about through Judah and gathered the Levites from all the cities of Judah, and the heads of fathers' houses of Israel, and they came to Jerusalem. ³ And all the assembly made a covenant with the king in the house of God. And Jehoiada^[a] said to them, “Behold, the king's son! Let him reign, as the LORD spoke concerning the sons of David. ⁴ This is the thing that you shall do: of you priests and Levites who come off duty on the Sabbath, one third shall be gatekeepers, ⁵ and one third shall be at the king's house and one third at the Gate of the Foundation. And all the people shall be in the courts of the house of the LORD. ⁶ Let no one enter the house of the LORD

except the priests and ministering Levites. They may enter, for they are holy, but all the people shall keep the charge of the LORD. ⁷ The Levites shall surround the king, each with his weapons in his hand. And whoever enters the house shall be put to death. Be with the king when he comes in and when he goes out.”

In the beginning of the Joash’s life, he had good counsel,
because he was directed by the priest, Jehoiada!

And in the seventh year Jehoida took courage...

As we’ve seen, the number 8 is the number of the new creation,
so this is not a new creation.

The Sabbath is a reminder of what God has done in the past—
whether the creation (as in Exodus 20) or the deliverance from Egypt (as in Dt 5).

So the seventh-year restoration of the monarchy
is not a new creation—

it is simply a restoration of the house of David.

And indeed, this is reinforced by the fact that the anointing of the King
takes place on a Sabbath!

Perhaps part of the reason for doing it on the Sabbath

is because it would be easy to disguise the comings and goings of the anointing
with the comings and goings of the regular Sabbath duties at the temple.

But also it is fitting that the Son of David enter his rest on the Sabbath,
because Joash is *not* the final Son of David.

The final Son of David will enter his rest on the eighth day—the first day of the new creation.

But in the days of Joash and Jehoiada that day had not yet come.

And so Jehoiada carefully orchestrates the anointing of King Joash.

The Chronicler emphasizes the role of the Levites in this coup.

Since the problem with the house of Ahab is Baal-worship,
perhaps it is not surprising that the solution to the Baal-worshiping Athaliah
comes from the Yahweh-worshiping priests and Levites at the temple.

The Chronicler uses the account in Kings as the foundation for his narrative,
but he adds a few things.

He adds the names of the conspirators (largely priestly/Levitical).

He also adds the idea of a covenant with “all the assembly” in verse 3,
including even “the heads of fathers’ houses of Israel” –
suggesting that there was a portion of the northern kingdom
that still was loyal to the house of David.

(This fits well with Jehu’s refusal to permit Israelites to go to Jerusalem to worship.
Jehu resorts to the golden calves at Bethel and Dan,
because he fears the powerful lure of the house of David).

The power of the name of David is seen in verse 3:

“Behold, the king’s son!

Let him reign, as the LORD spoke concerning the sons of David.”

That’s the entire argument that Jehoiada provides.

(I don’t doubt that Jehoiada said more in his speech –

but the Chronicler thought that this one point was all that really needed to be said)

He’s the son of David. Let him reign!

Ray Dillard points out that for the Chronicler,

“the temple is not the seat of a satisfied theocratic status quo,

but is rather the guardian and promoter of the Davidic succession.” (p181)

If that is so, then what would the Chronicler be saying about his own day?

Where is the son of David?

We cannot rest content with having a temple!

We must have the son of David to reign over us!

b. The Coronation of Joash (v8-11)

⁸ *The Levites and all Judah did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded, and they each brought his men, who were to go off duty on the Sabbath, with those who were to come on duty on the Sabbath, for Jehoiada the priest did not dismiss the divisions.* ⁹ *And Jehoiada the priest gave to the captains the spears and the large and small shields that had been King David's, which were in the house of God.* ¹⁰ *And he set all the people as a guard for the king, every man with his weapon in his hand, from the south side of the house to the north side of the house, around the altar and the house.* ¹¹ *Then they brought out the king's son and put the crown on him and gave him the testimony. And they proclaimed him king, and Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and they said, “Long live the king.”*

So Jehoiada crafts a plan to restore the house of David.

The changing of the guard on the Sabbath would be a busy time at the temple.

Everyone would expect a lot of people to be there.

So Jehoiada gave the captains the spears and shields that had been King David’s,
and arranged the ceremony to protect Joash from any assassination attempt;
and then *they brought out the king’s son and put the crown on him
and gave him the testimony.*

The testimony would likely be a copy of the Law of Moses,

which Deuteronomy said that the king should study daily.

*And they proclaimed him king and Jehoiada and his sons anointed him, and they said,
‘Long live the king!’ (v11)*

But when Athaliah hears this, she rushed out to see what was happening.

And seeing the king standing by the pillar,
and all the rejoicing of the people,
she tore her clothes and cried, "TREASON!"

c. The Execution of Athaliah (v12-14)

¹² When Athaliah heard the noise of the people running and praising the king, she went into the house of the LORD to the people. ¹³ And when she looked, there was the king standing by his pillar at the entrance, and the captains and the trumpeters beside the king, and all the people of the land rejoicing and blowing trumpets, and the singers with their musical instruments leading in the celebration. And Athaliah tore her clothes and cried, "Treason! Treason!" ¹⁴ Then Jehoiada the priest brought out the captains who were set over the army, saying to them, "Bring her out between the ranks, and anyone who follows her is to be put to death with the sword." For the priest said, "Do not put her to death in the house of the LORD." ¹⁵ So they laid hands on her,^[b] and she went into the entrance of the horse gate of the king's house, and they put her to death there.

And notice where she was killed:
as her mother Jezebel was trampled by horses,
even so, she is killed by the horses' entrance of the king's house.

The king's house—
the very house where she had slaughtered the royal family—
is the place where Athaliah meets her end.

And, quite frankly, she should have seen it coming!
What had happened to her parents?
Ahab and Jezebel had plotted the murder of Naboth,
and everything seemed to be going so well—
until Jehu arose and paid them back for their sin.
Of course, there was no prophet to warn Athaliah,
like Elijah warned Ahab.
But then again,
Athaliah should have learned from her parents!

The LORD sees in secret.
And he works in secret.
While Athaliah reigned secure,
never fearing for her throne,
the LORD was plotting in secret against her,
and her kingdom fell in a moment when the anger of the LORD arose.

You may think that you have covered your tracks.
You may think that your sins are secret.
But the LORD who sees in secret,
will reveal all things openly at the final day—
although our passage tonight warns:

it may come sooner than that!

d. The Destruction of the House of Baal, the Defense of the House of the LORD, and the Renewal of the King's House (v16-21)

¹⁶ And Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and all the people and the king that they should be the LORD's people. ¹⁷ Then all the people went to the house of Baal and tore it down; his altars and his images they broke in pieces, and they killed Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars. ¹⁸ And Jehoiada posted watchmen for the house of the LORD under the direction of the Levitical priests and the Levites whom David had organized to be in charge of the house of the LORD, to offer burnt offerings to the LORD, as it is written in the Law of Moses, with rejoicing and with singing, according to the order of David. ¹⁹ He stationed the gatekeepers at the gates of the house of the LORD so that no one should enter who was in any way unclean. ²⁰ And he took the captains, the nobles, the governors of the people, and all the people of the land, and they brought the king down from the house of the LORD, marching through the upper gate to the king's house. And they set the king on the royal throne. ²¹ So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was quiet after Athaliah had been put to death with the sword.

So Athaliah is the last of the house of Ahab to die.

And with her death, the worship of Baal is stamped out of Judah as well.

Now the covenant is renewed.

In Kings it says:

Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people, that they should be the LORD's people, and also between the king and the people. (2 Kings 11:17)

But here, the Chronicler simply says,

Jehoiada made a covenant between himself and all the people and the king that they should be the LORD's people. (v16)

Notice the differences:

In Kings Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD, the king, and the people.

In Chronicles, he made a covenant between *himself*, and all the people, and the king.

In Kings it looks like there are two covenants –

a covenant between the LORD (on one hand) and the king and the people (on the other); and then a 2nd covenant between the king (on the one hand) and the people (on the other).

In Chronicles there is only one covenant that includes the priest, the king, and the people, with the priest curiously taking the LORD's place.

The 2nd covenant between the king and the people is omitted.

What does this mean?

Probably the Chronicler is just simplifying the narrative –

but in the process he emphasizes the role of the priest.

In the book of Kings, the emphasis is on the LORD as the great king –

and Joash as the lesser king (the vassal of the great king, Yahweh).
The reason why Yahweh is named as a party to the covenant,
is because the Davidic covenant had been broken –
and so only through this covenant renewal can the covenant be restored.
In the book of Chronicles, the point is that
the LORD’s covenant with David cannot be broken by man.

You don’t need a new covenant –
you need the priest, the people and the king
to be faithful to the covenant that God has already made!

Both perspectives are accurate.

And the results are the same:

now that they have covenanted to be the LORD’s people,
they must eliminate all rival gods.

And so the people of the land *went to the house of Baal and tore it down;
his altars and his images they broke in pieces,
and they killed Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars.*

Jehoiada’s reforms in verses 18-19 are explicitly said to be rooted in the “order of David,”
once again reinforcing the Davidic pattern of Israel’s worship.

Baal is overthrown,
the worship of Yahweh is restored,
and the king is seated on the royal throne.

Verse 21 brings to fulfillment the Sabbath-theme of the chapter:

*So all the people of the land rejoiced,
and the city was quiet after Athaliah had been put to death with the sword.*

There is joy and rest and peace,
now that Athaliah is gone.

A sabbath-rest comes to the people of God,
because the foul seed of Ahab is no more.

2. The Early Years of Joash: the Counsel of Jehoiada (24:1-16)

a. Introduction: the Importance of Jehoiada (v1-3)

24 Joash^[c] was seven years old when he began to reign, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba. ² And Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest. ³ Jehoiada got for him two wives, and he had sons and daughters.

The early years of Joash were good years.

“Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest.”
That should warn you that worse days are ahead!

But at first, Joash listened to Jehoiada, and the LORD was with him.

Kings tells us (2 Kings 12:3) that Joash did not remove the high places –
a point that the Chronicler omits,
since he wants to highlight the good parts of Joash’s early reign.

b. The Restoration of the House of the LORD (v4-14)

⁴ After this Joash decided to restore the house of the LORD. ⁵ And he gathered the priests and the Levites and said to them, “Go out to the cities of Judah and gather from all Israel money to repair the house of your God from year to year, and see that you act quickly.” But the Levites did not act quickly. ⁶ So the king summoned Jehoiada the chief and said to him, “Why have you not required the Levites to bring in from Judah and Jerusalem the tax levied by Moses, the servant of the LORD, and the congregation of Israel for the tent of testimony?” ⁷ For the sons of Athaliah, that wicked woman, had broken into the house of God, and had also used all the dedicated things of the house of the LORD for the Baals.

Joash set out to restore the house of the LORD that had fallen into disrepair.

So in v4-5, we hear that he sent out the priests and Levites to raise money for the repairs.

“But the Levites did not act quickly.”

We know from 2 Kings 12:6 that it was in the 23rd year of Joash that he summoned Jehoiada, but the Chronicler does not mention this.

In other words, the Chronicler’s version emphasizes the connection between Joash’s reforms and Jehoiada’s counsel –
in spite of the fact that the chronology is a little messier.

The Chronicler knew that it took 23 years for this to happen (he had read Kings!) –
but his point is that even with all the delay (which he mentions),
Joash was generally a good king – so long as he listened to Jehoiada.

⁸ So the king commanded, and they made a chest and set it outside the gate of the house of the LORD.

In Kings, it says that the chest was “beside the altar on the south side.”

In the second temple, which existed in the Chronicler’s time,
no one besides the priests were allowed near the altar.

It appears that the Chronicler is describing Joash’s practice
in terms of the later requirements for maintaining the sanctity of the temple.

⁹ And proclamation was made throughout Judah and Jerusalem to bring in for the LORD the tax that Moses the servant of God laid on Israel in the wilderness.

But notice the response of the people to this tax:

¹⁰ *And all the princes and all the people rejoiced and brought their tax and dropped it into the chest until they had finished.*^[d]

Have you ever heard of such rejoicing at the opportunity to pay taxes?!
Throughout the scriptures you frequently find the people of God
rejoicing at the opportunity to give of themselves, and of their resources,
to further the work of the kingdom of God!

But now, in verse 11, we hear about the way in which Joash kept an eye on the giving,
in order to prevent corruption from continuing:

¹¹ *And whenever the chest was brought to the king's officers by the Levites, when they saw that there was much money in it, the king's secretary and the officer of the chief priest would come and empty the chest and take it and return it to its place. Thus they did day after day, and collected money in abundance.* ¹² *And the king and Jehoiada gave it to those who had charge of the work of the house of the LORD, and they hired masons and carpenters to restore the house of the LORD, and also workers in iron and bronze to repair the house of the LORD.* ¹³ *So those who were engaged in the work labored, and the repairing went forward in their hands, and they restored the house of God to its proper condition and strengthened it.* ¹⁴ *And when they had finished, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada, and with it were made utensils for the house of the LORD, both for the service and for the burnt offerings, and dishes for incense and vessels of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD regularly all the days of Jehoiada.*

And whenever the chest filled up,
the king's secretary and the officer of the chief priest (two trusted men),
bagged and counted the money,
and then gave it to the workmen.

This system worked much better,
because you could see from the results that the work was getting done!

And with the leftover moneys,
they made utensils for the house of the LORD =
“and they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD
regularly all the days of Jehoiada.”

Once again, an ominous way of saying it!

Was Joash only a “good king”
because his foster father was always looking over his shoulder?

It is good to seek and to follow good and wise counsel.
But if you only do what is right when that sort of person is standing behind you,
then you have not yet learned the path of wisdom!

c. The Death of Jehoiada and His Burial Among the Kings (v15-16)

¹⁵ *But Jehoiada grew old and full of days, and died. He was 130 years old at his death.* ¹⁶ *And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done good in Israel, and toward God and his house.*

Notice where Jehoiada is buried!
“among the kings”!

Jehoiada is the one high priest in Jerusalem
who receives this honor (as far as we know).

He is buried among the sons of David
“because he had done good in Israel, and toward God and his house.”

3. “After the Death of Jehoiada”: the Counsel of the Princes (v17-24)

a. “They Served the Asherim and the Idols” (v17-19)

¹⁷ *Now after the death of Jehoiada the princes of Judah came and paid homage to the king. Then the king listened to them.* ¹⁸ *And they abandoned the house of the LORD, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols. And wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this guilt of theirs.* ¹⁹ *Yet he sent prophets among them to bring them back to the LORD. These testified against them, but they would not pay attention.*

But after the death of Jehoiada, Joash abandoned the LORD and his priest,
and instead listened to the princes of Judah
(in this he sounds like Rehoboam).

Joash is only in his 30s or early 40s –
and he has lived his whole life under the watchful eye of the priest.

Now that Jehoiada is out of the way,
he begins to cut loose of the ways of Jehoiada,
and he led the people in serving the Asherim and the idols,
bringing wrath upon Judah and Jerusalem.

Verse 19 says that God sent prophets to bring back the people to the LORD –
but the people would “not pay attention” (v19).

b. The Martyrdom of Zechariah the Son of Jehoiada (v20-22)

²⁰ *Then the Spirit of God clothed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people, and said to them, “Thus says God, ‘Why do you break the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.’”*
²¹ *But they conspired against him, and by command of the king they stoned him with stones in the court of the house of the LORD.* ²² *Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness that Jehoiada, Zechariah's father, had shown him, but killed his son. And when he was dying, he said, “May the LORD see and avenge!”^[e]*

Finally, Zechariah the priest – the son of Jehoiada – confronted Joash before all the people.
(read v20).

Jehoiada had made sure that Athaliah (the Baal-worshiper) was not killed in the temple.

But Joash does not offer Zechariah the same courtesy.

He was “stoned with stones in the court of the house of the LORD.”

In the very place where Joash was protected by Jehoiada from the onslaught of the queen,
now Joash assassinates the son of his protector and defender.

If you speak the word of the LORD to sinners and rebels,
this is likely going to be your fate!

Of course, if you persecute those who speak the word of the LORD,
there is a worse fate awaiting you!

c. Syria Executes Judgment on Joash (v23-24)

²³ *At the end of the year the army of the Syrians came up against Joash. They came to Judah and Jerusalem and destroyed all the princes of the people from among the people and sent all their spoil to the king of Damascus.* ²⁴ *Though the army of the Syrians had come with few men, the LORD delivered into their hand a very great army, because Judah^[1] had forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers. Thus they executed judgment on Joash.*

The blood of Ahab his great-grandfather still flows in Joash’s veins.

And since he now is acting like Ahab,
the curse of the Omrides falls on Joash as well!

Elijah had been told that Hazael was to be anointed as king over Syria,
in order to bring judgment on the house of Ahab.

And Joash is the last of that house—the house of Omri.
And he responds to the coming of Hazael in typical Omride fashion.
In Kings we are told that Joash plundered the house of the LORD,
and sent Hazael all the gold in Jerusalem.

Here it simply says that the Syrians destroyed all the princes of the people...
and sent all their spoil to the king of Damascus.

Joash is a good king, the son of David, the LORD’s anointed.
But he is also a son of Ahab.

2 Chronicles 24 shows how Joash truly demonstrates that he is a son of Ahab,
as he kills Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest,
and persecutes the prophets—even as Ahab had done.

Conclusion: The Assassination of Joash and His Burial NOT among the Kings (v25-27)

²⁵ *When they had departed from him, leaving him severely wounded, his servants conspired*

against him because of the blood of the son^[g] of Jehoiada the priest, and killed him on his bed. So he died, and they buried him in the city of David, but they did not bury him in the tombs of the kings.²⁶ Those who conspired against him were Zabad the son of Shimeath the Ammonite, and Jehozabad the son of Shimrith the Moabite.²⁷ Accounts of his sons and of the many oracles against him and of the rebuilding^[h] of the house of God are written in the Story of the Book of the Kings. And Amaziah his son reigned in his place.

After the Syrians left,
his servants conspired against him and killed him on his bed.

Joash ends his days very much like the house of Ahab:
cut down by his own servants!

He was buried in the city of David – but not in the tombs of the kings.
Jehoiada is there!
But not Joash.

And so we might ask:

How can the blessing of David come to its fruition,
so long as the curse of Ahab remains upon the sons of David?
It's the same question that we get from the Pentateuch:
how can the blessing of Abraham come to fruition,
so long as the curse of the Law remains on the children of Israel?

What happens when God's curse and God's promise meet?
Yes, mercy triumphs over judgment.
But God's curse is never fully satisfied until the last son of David
(and the last son of Ahab)
takes that curse upon himself.
Because Jesus is the last heir of the house of Ahab.

When God's curse and God's promise meet,
you may be certain that God's promise will triumph—
even if it looks like the Son of David has been overthrown,
buried in the depths of the earth,
rest assured that God's purpose is to raise his people from the dead,
and give them life.